

**Health Ministry Said on Saturday That the Number of Deaths From the Coronavirus Pandemic In Iran Increased to 90,630 With 286 More Iranians Killed by the Virus Over the Past 24 Hours**

# IRAN NEWS

**Defense Minister Brigadier General Amir Hatami Announced Saturday That More Than One Million Doses of the “Fakhra” Vaccine Will Be Produced in Its 3rd Clinical Trial Phase**

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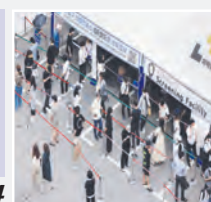


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## Leader Grants Clemency To over 2,800 Prisoners

TEHRAN (IFP) - Supreme Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has pardoned or commuted prison terms of 2,825 convicts sentenced by various Iranian courts.

Ayatollah Khamenei granted amnesty the convicts on the occasion of Eid al-Adha (also known as the Feast of Sacrifice), and Eid al-Ghadeer.

The pardon was made at the request of Judiciary Chief Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Ejei.

Eid al-Adha marks the end of the hajj pilgrimage and is one of the most significant holidays in the Muslim calendar.

Eid al-Ghadeer is a festive day observed by Shiite Muslims on the 18th of Dhu al-Hijjah in the Islamic calendar to commemorate the appointment of Ali ibn Abi Talib by the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH) as his immediate successor.

Article 110 of the Iranian Constitution grants the Leader the right to pardon or reduce the sentences of convicts upon a recommendation from the head of the judiciary.

## Iran's Exports to Turkey More Than 2.5 Times

ANKARA (Dispatches) - Turkey's statistics center said in a new report published On Friday, July 30, that the country imported about \$1.2 billion in imports from Iran in the first half of 2021, a 153 percent increase from the same period last year, more than 2.5 times.

Part of the reason for the significant growth of Iran's exports to Turkey is the issue of gas exports. Turkey had not received any gas from Iran last spring because of a terrorist attack on a gas pipeline on the border with Iran.

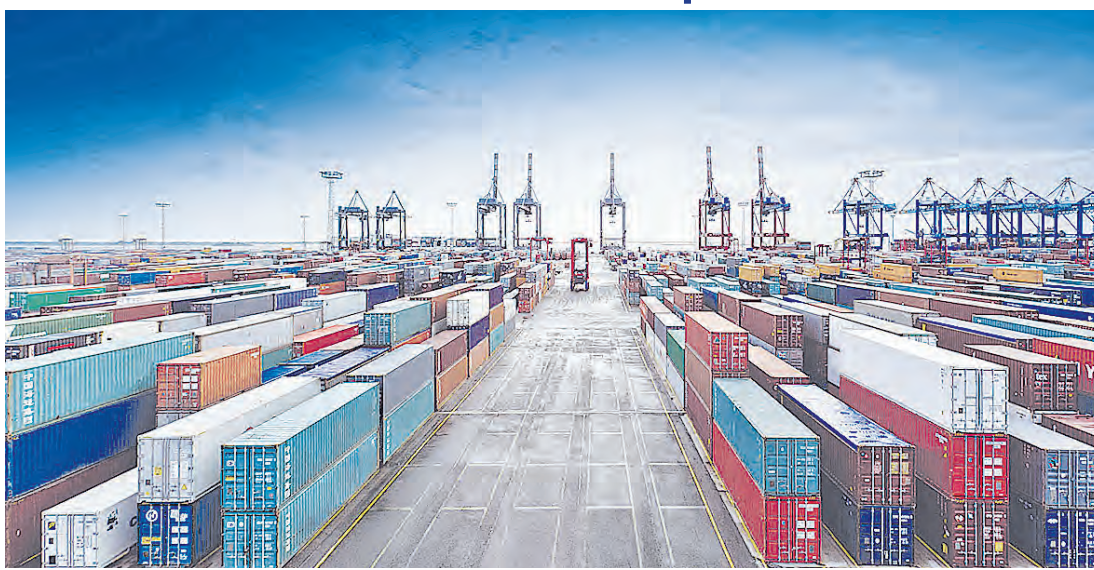
Turkey's exports to Iran also grew by about 50 percent to \$1.267 billion in the first half of this year compared to the same period last year, the report said. Thus, the trade balance of the two countries has benefited Turkey.

At the same time, Iranian customs also published a non-oil foreign trade report in the first four months of 1400, showing that Iran's exports to Turkey doubled to \$923 million and imports from Turkey grew by nearly 30 percent to \$1.5 billion.

The way the two countries calculate exports and imports varies, so that Turkey only considers goods that are imported directly for domestic consumption, not transit to another country.

Iranian customs statistics show that the country's total non-oil exports (including gasoline and gas) grew by 65 percent to \$14.3 billion in the first four months of the year and imports grew by 32 percent to \$14.5 billion.

## China, the Major Destination For Iran's Exports



IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN – Head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) says China is the most important destination for Iran's exports, adding that the transit of goods from Iran's land borders has grown by 95 percent.

Mehdi Mirashrafi said that Iran's foreign trade in the first four months of the current year has improved and the statistics show growth both in imports and exports.

He said in the first four months, some 50.8m tons of goods worth \$29b have been traded between Iran and other countries which show 21 percent growth in weight and 47 percent in value.

He added that the share of non-oil goods exports from Iran's foreign trade is 38.3m tons worth of \$14.3b which signals 27 percent growth in weight and 65 percent in value comparing to the same period last year.

Mirashrafi noted that China ranks first in Iran's export destinations as Iran's exports to this country in the first four months were around 10m tons worth of \$4.3b while Iraq, the UAE, Turkey and Afghanistan have trailed China as the next major destinations for Iran's exports.

Iran's top five non-oil export destinations during this period were China with over \$3 billion worth of exports, Iraq with \$2.406 billion, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with over \$1.554 billion, and Afghanistan with \$871 million as well as Turkey with \$513 million, so the country's top five export destinations remained the same in comparison to previous months, according to IRICA.

He also said that Iran's imports in the same period were 12.5m tons worth of \$14.5b which shows 5 percent growth in terms of weight and 32 percent in terms of value.

He went on to say that the UAE has been the major exporter to Iran in the same period as the country has exported 4m tons of goods worth of \$4.7b and China has trailed the UAE with exporting one million tons of goods worth \$3.1m.

According to Mirashrafi, the significant increase in the value of trade indicates that the negative impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on Iran's foreign trade has alleviated.

"The impact of the pandemic on Iran's trade has decreased from 54 percent in late March to 27 percent in August," he said.

He also said that the transit of goods from Iran's land borders has improved in the same period as some 3.753m tons of goods have been transited from the country's land borders which shows 95 percent growth comparing to the same period last year.

## Vienna Talks Aim to Restore Original JCPOA

MOSCOW (Dispatches) - Russia's lead negotiator at the Vienna talks on the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran says the ongoing negotiations aim to restore the agreement in its original form, nothing more and nothing less.

Mikhail Ulyanov, Russia's Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna, made the remarks in a tweet on Friday, asserting earlier statement by his Iranian counterpart Kazem Gharibabadi, who said Tehran would not allow the Vienna talks to feature irrelevant issues.

In an interview published on Ayatollah Khamenei's official website, Khamenei.ir, on Wednesday, the Iranian permanent ambassador to Vienna-based international organizations said the European parties to the deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), "still consider the nuclear agreement to be a bridge enabling their interference in irrelevant issues such as Iran's missile work and its regional affairs."

"The purpose they seek through this is to start addressing these [irrelevant] issues [on various occasions] and consider them to be indivisible parts of the nuclear deal, and [therefore] lay the groundwork for their interference in these areas," Gharibabadi wrote.

In his tweet, Ulyanov urged all the parties to the JCPOA not to deviate from the main objective of the Vienna talks and to stop efforts to add something new to the deal.

"Indeed, the agreed goal of the #ViennaTalks is to restore the original #JCPOA. Nothing more and nothing less. ALL participants should take care of not creating - even non-intentionally - impression that they deviate from this common goal and try to add something new to the deal," the senior Russian diplomat tweeted.

The JCPOA was reached between Iran and six world powers, including the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China.

## Zarif Slams U.S., E3 for Trying to Blackmail Iran

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has censured the United States and E3 or the three European parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal over their "ill-intention" with regard to Iran and trying to blackmail Iran into renegotiating the deal.

"The U.S. and E3 have been transparent about their transgressions and have repeatedly stated their ill-intention to compel Iran to renegotiate [the JCPOA] provisions through economic pressure and blackmail," Zarif said in a letter to UN Secretary General António Guterres published on Friday.

He noted that his experience as Iran's foreign minister shows that Western powers find it beneath them to engage on equal footing with middle-income countries, let alone developing nations. According to Zarif, while Iran fully complied with its obligations under the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Western countries only paid lip service to their contractual obligations.

He also pointed to the U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 under former U.S. president Donald Trump, saying after Trump withdrew from the deal, the U.S. and E3 believed that they could reap the fruits of their poisonous tree and resume their old habit of "what's mine is mine and what's yours is negotiable."

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## U.S. Indicts Canadian-Iranian For Business With Iran

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - A federal grand jury in the U.S. capital on Friday indicted a Canadian-Iranian dual national with the unlawful export of laboratory equipment from the United States to Iran, through Canada and the United Arab Emirates, a Department of Justice statement said(link is external).

Reza Sarhangpour Kafrani, aka Reza Sarhang, 46, a resident of Montreal was indicted in the District of Columbia on multiple counts, including violations of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), which grants the president powers to determine an international threat and take up measures to deal with it.

Beginning in 2015, Kafrani began attempts to purchase mass spectrometry equipment from U.S. companies to ship to the UAE. But Chromatography and spectrometry analytical instruments, such as some of the laboratory equipment purchased by Kafrani, are controlled for nuclear nonproliferation reasons and require a license to be exported from the United States to either Iran or the UAE.

But Kafrani and a co-conspirator were able to ship one mass spectrometer, ship it to Canada and then send it to UAE for transfer to Iran. They then tried to buy more, hiding the real destination of the equipment.

The indictment means Kafrani has to stand trial and does not mean he is guilty as charged. Indictments are merely allegations until proven in court.

## Raid on Israeli-Managed Vessel Was Retaliation for Israeli Raid on Syria

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Informed sources have told Al-Alam television that an attack on an Israeli-managed petroleum products tanker off the coast of Oman in the Arabian Sea that killed two crew members was in response to an Israeli missile attack on Syria that killed two resistance forces.

The Mercer Street, a Liberian-flagged, Japanese-owned ship, came under attack about 152 nautical miles (280 km) northeast of the Omani port of Duqm on Thursday, according to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), which provides maritime security information.

In a statement on Friday, Zodiac Maritime, the Israeli-owned firm managing the oil tanker, claimed that two crewmen, a Briton and a Romanian, had been killed in the assault.

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# Zarif Voices Iran's Support for Turkey Amid Wildfires

TEHRAN (Tasnim) –Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif assured Turkey that Iran will provide whatever assistance necessary in the efforts to contain raging wildfires in the neighboring state.

“I was very affected by the fire that broke out in some parts of Turkey. We share the pain of the government and people of Turkey and we will stand by them,” the top Iranian diplomat said in a tweet on Friday.

“May God have mercy on the deceased, I wish a speedy recovery to the injured,” he added.

## President Defends COVID-19 National Task Force Decisions

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

**TEHRAN – President Hassan Rouhani said that all of the decisions made by the National Task Force for combating COVID-19 were based on collective wisdom.**

The President evaluated the decisions of the National Task Force for combating COVID-19 based on the principles of science and collective wisdom and said: “Every week, we made the decisions that we felt were necessary and in 78 meetings, we passed a total of 573 resolutions.”

Speaking at the National Task Force for combating COVID-19 meeting on Saturday, he hoped that Iranians would be on the path to health and the vicious virus will soon be cut off from society and all the people of the world.

Rouhani continued: “Since the beginning of Corona outbreak, at the end of 2019, when the National Task Force for combating COVID-19 started to work, we had regular meetings every week, and God willing, in these meetings, the issues that had previously been discussed in committees had been finalized.”

He went on to say that the meeting of the National Task Force was joined online by provincial headquarters, governors, and Presidents of the universities of medical sciences, and this online meeting was the source of great help in the creation of coordination procedure.

Rouhani added: “These online meetings create coordination throughout the country because the highest decision-making authority was engaged in the issues.

Referring to the fact that the formation of the Task Force was directly approved by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, President Rouhani reminded: Organizing of the National Task Force was done correctly, on time, accurately, and quickly. Coronavirus entered Iran on the last day of February 2019, and immediate decisions to contain the virus were made. In addition, various committees were forced to confront the virus.



Meanwhile Iran's National Task Force for Combating Coronavirus spokesman said that more than 164 countries had been infected with the COVID Delta variant.

Alireza Raisi, in a press conference on Saturday describing the latest COVID situation in Iran, stated that 29 provinces had been infected with the COVID Delta variant, and the number of hospital admissions is high.

He pointed out that if health protocols were not followed at a high level, a heavier COVID wave would be observed in the coming weeks.

Stressing the importance of vaccination to fight against the virus, he said the death toll and hospitalization rates were lower among those vaccinated.

Raisi noted that the amount of COVID vaccine import is acceptable, and about 7 million doses of vaccine would be delivered to the Health Ministry by August 22.

He also went on to say that the vaccination speed in Iran is acceptable, and people over 55 can register for vaccination.

## Envoy Vows to Pursue Beating of Iranian in Swedish Custody

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's ambassador to Stockholm says the embassy will follow up the case of beating up an Iranian national in Swedish custody until its perpetrators are punished.

“Today, I found out that an Iranian was severely beaten on Eid al-Ghadir by officers at a Swedish detention center. I requested an immediate visit to ensure his health,” Ahmad Masoumifar tweeted on Friday, referring to the occasion of Ghadir, which is amongst the most significant feasts of Shia Muslims.

“I will not tolerate disrespect and violation of the rights of my country's nationals. I will pursue the issue until its perpetrators are identified and punished.”

In cooperation with the anti-Iran Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) terrorist group, European countries have arrested and imprisoned many Iranians under false pretexts.

## MP Talks of U.S New Conditions For Reviving JCPOA

TEHRAN (MNA) – An Iranian lawmaker says the Western countries continue to put forward “excessive demands” from Iran for reviving the nuclear deal.

“America has set a new condition. If we accept that there will be an agreement and if we don't, no agreement will be reached; [The condition relates to] new commitments in the region. In other words, Americans are seeking a ‘JCPOA+’ for themselves and a ‘minimum JCPOA’ for us,” Mojtaba Zonnour a member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said.

“The Western and American sides have announced that the Islamic Republic should in the final statement of 5+1 commit to cooperate with the West over regional security,” he said, adding that the most important issue for West regarding the region is “ensuring the security of ISIL and Takfiri terrorists, the Israeli regime, and heads of reactionary regimes.”

This security is unilateral which means only the Islamic Republic should not possess the capability of threatening those countries and this is just for humiliating Iran while reactionary countries can continue to have arms contracts worth billions of dollars, added the lawmaker.

“According to the proposal, the Islamic Republic can neither have knowledge on missiles nor do trade on arms and missiles. In other words, the West is targeting our defense power.”

“For instance, they say the range of Iran's missile should not surpass 200-300 kilometers. How can they know that? They want to install cameras in our military facilities, as the IAEA did in nuclear facilities ... So there will remain no military secrets for us. America and the West are not abandoning their excessive demands.”

He urged the next Iranian administration to continue the talks to secure the rights of the Iranian nation. “The other side has no choice but to reach an agreement. We are optimistic that they will accept Iranian nation's rights and an agreement will be finalized in favor of Iran.”

Elsewhere, Zonnour said that the perspective for the Vienna talks is ‘positive’. “Due to the determination of Raisi's government, the 5+1 will certainly yield to the agreement and for sure, conditions will improve. Considering the data that we have about the negotiations, we have a positive perspective ahead and the atmosphere of our relations with the world will improve compared to the past.”

## Tehran Ready to Help Ankara In Fight Against Forest Fires

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran says it is ready to assist Turkey in its fight against the forest fires that have engulfed the southern and western coasts over the last three days.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh on Friday voiced Iran's sympathy with the Turkish government and people over the incident which claimed the lives of at least four people and injured more than 180 as thousands of firefighters were battling huge blazes spreading across the Mediterranean resort regions of Turkey's coasts.

He expressed regret over heavy financial damages and fatalities caused by the wildfires.

According to AFP, the fires first emerged across a sparsely populated region about 75 kilometers east of Antalya - a resort especially popular with Russian and other eastern European tourists.

But they were creeping closer Thursday to sandy beaches dotted with hotels and resorts.

Images on social media and Turkish TV showed residents jumping out of their cars and running for their lives through smoke- filled streets lit up by orange flames.

### Source Dismisses New Iranian Admin's Intervention to Choose Tehran Mayor



TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An informed source said the administration of Iranian President-elect Ebrahim Raisi would by no means intervene in the process of election of the new mayor of Tehran.

Speaking to Tasnim on Saturday, the informed source said the 13th administration of Iran, soon to be formed under the presidency of Ebrahim Raisi, will not intervene by any means in the decisions made by the members of Tehran City Council about election of a new mayor for the capital.

The source emphasized that the next administration will do its utmost to help settle the problems of Tehran after election of the new mayor and will act to address the needs of citizens according to the top priorities.

Raisi won the June 18 presidential election by winning nearly 62 percent of the votes and will take office as Iran's eighth president in August.

## Big Step Taken in Leveraging Capacities of Women in Iran

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran's Vice President for Women and Family Affairs Masoumeh Ebtekar said on Saturday that the administration has taken a big step in leveraging capacities of women, noting that over 25% of officials in high, middle, and basic levels have been chosen from among women.

During the last 4 years, an annual report was compiled to show performance of governors-general, ministers, and the administration in regard with their measures taken to reach the 30 percent target in women's share of official posts, Ebtekar said.

The latest report shows that 25.2 percent of managerial positions in high, middle, and basic levels is occupied by



as ambassadors. Five women are currently serving as Iran's ambassador in other countries.

women, according to the vice president.

She noted that the posts include deputy ministers, directors-general, county governors, deputy governors-general, district governors, and other positions in such ranks, but no low ranking posts, like school principals, have been included.

Ebtekar added that Ministry of Interior has had the highest number of women appointments and Hormozgan and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces top the list in Iran.

She also said that President Hassan Rouhani's administration was the first in the history of Islamic Republic to appoint women

## Iran, Syria Parliaments Ratify Inclusive Agreement

TEHRAN (IRNA) – Majlis Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said that the parliaments of Iran and Syria will ratify the inclusive agreement that has been working on for more than a year between the two countries.

Speaking to reporters upon his arrival in Tehran after a four-day visit to Syria, Qalibaf said on Friday that according to the conclusion of the negotiations held in Damascus, Iran and Syria will begin to carry out an inclusive agreement within the next three months.

Qalibaf added that he and his delegation have held fruitful talks with the Syrian authorities about the ways to achieve the economic and trade targets in the relations between the two countries.

In his remarks, he unveiled plans for the Syrian Prime Minister's upcoming visit to Tehran, saying Hussein Arnous is scheduled to take part in the inauguration of Iranian President-elect Ebrahim Raisi.

Iranian Parliament Speaker added that the situation in Syria is an exceptional trade opportunity for Iran.

Before leaving Tehran for Damascus, Qalibaf on Tuesday said that the visit is done due to the official invitation of Syria to negotiate and consult with the high officials of this country on bilateral economic and regional cooperation.

## Cyberspace Protection Plan to Help Filter Social Messaging

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK

TEHRAN - Minister of Communications and Information Technology says the so-called “protecting the rights of cyberspace users” is likely to be a “massive restriction on the width of social messaging and their filtering.”

Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi published a memo on his Telegram page on Thursday, criticizing the plan to restrict and censor the Internet, warning that the plan “will not only create a system for cyber governance of the country, but will also undermine the country's real space governance system.”

Despite widespread opposition from Iranian social media users, the Majlis voted a day before a special commission to decide whether to implement a plan known as “protecting the rights of users in cyberspace and organizing social messaging.”

Criticizing the decision, Azari Jahromi said that such a commission would have more power than the government and the president, and that since “even the possibility of parliamentarians overseeing functions in this area has been lost,” then “more irregularities in the governance of the country” would arise if it was finally approved.

## Iran, Kenya Boost Cultural Ties Through Holding 4 Exhibitions

TEHRAN (IP) - Following the expansion of Iran-Kenya cultural relations, the Iranian Embassy in Kenya organized four cultural and artistic exhibitions last year, said Iran's ambassador to Kenya.

Speaking at the unveiling ceremony of seven Iranian educational, research, and skill carpet books and women entrepreneurs work in handicrafts, Jafar Barmaki elaborated on the Iranian Embassy exhibitions in Kenya. ‘Africa and COVID-19’, ‘Iranian women artists exhibition’ with the presence of artists from the Latin American’, the Persian Gulf, and Asian countries, ‘Silent weapons Caricature’ and the last one an exhibition with more than 1000 works of art from all over the world to ‘fight violence, terrorism, and weapons, he stated.

“Iran also holds the ‘Iranian Baluchis Museum living in Africa’, which migrated there more than 200 years ago and succeeded against Portuguese colonialism; the place is visited annually by hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world,” Iran's ambassador to Kenya highlighted.

Barmaki noted that art is a means to meet any country's cultural, economic, and political interests.

Expressing hope to expand cultural programs even more than ever after coronavirus eradication, Barmaki pointed out that anyone can convey their message to the world through art even without physical presence. “Iran intends to put on show and exhibit the works of Kenyan artists in various fields in an immediate future,” Iran's ambassador to Kenya added.

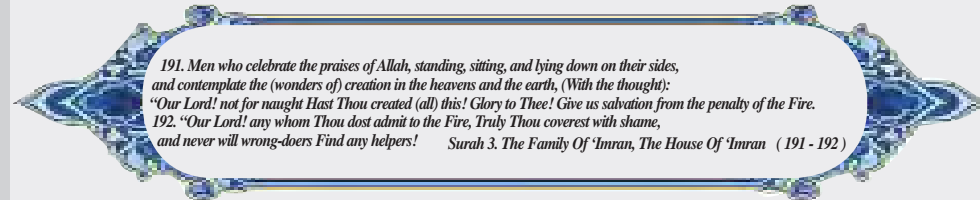
The unveiling ceremony of seven Iranian educational, research, and skill carpet books and women entrepreneurs works in handicrafts were held on Saturday, July 31, with Iran's ambassador to Kenya in attendance at IRIB Radio Office in Tehran.





## PRAYER TIME

■ Noon (Zohr)	13:10
■ Evening (Maghreb)	20:28
■ Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr)	04:37
■ Tomorrow's Sunrise	06:13



## Iranian Co. Thrown Out of One-Billion-Dollar Project in Afghanistan

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

**TEHRAN – Secretary of Association of Iranian Exporters of Technical and Engineering Services claims an Iranian company has been thrown out of a one-billion-dollar project in Afghanistan due to Saudi Arabia's pressure.**

Speaking to ILNA, Bahman Salehi Javid said that the continuation of violence and insecurity is one of the dangers threatening Iranian trade in Afghanistan because international insurance companies avoid insuring Iranian companies and the backing of Iranian insurance companies is not enough to cover all of the risks, adding that if the violence and insecurity continues, Iranian companies will face high risks and will suffer heavy losses.

Speaking on the current condition of exporting technical and engineering services to Afghanistan after recent political developments in this country, Salehi Javid said that Afghanistan is one of the target countries and neighbors, and commonalities in language and culture have paved a good ground for cooperation between the two states but due to the political ups and downs in Afghanistan, Iranian companies feel the heat of these fluctuations and it will increase the risk of presence in this country.

He noted that regarding the Iranian companies' presence in Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Government is under influence of other countries and rivals, adding that almost one month ago, an Iranian company won a one-billion-dollar project tender in Afghanistan but the company was thrown out of the project because one of the financiers of the project was Saudi Arabia.

He reiterated that Iran and the association are keen for Iranian companies' presence in Afghanistan but due to the recent developments in this country, Iranian companies



require to be more cautious for presence in this country and wait for a while until a relatively peace and security is restored in this country for resumption of activities.

Salehi Javid added that recent developments in Afghanistan have increased the risk of trade in this country for Iranian companies, adding that the U.S. pressure as well as banking and insurance problems worsen the condition for trade.

He pointed to the significance of Afghanistan for Iran's trade, saying that Afghanistan is a market which opens the way for working on other countries like Persian-language countries like Tajikistan or countries like Turkmenistan. He noted although Iran has joint borders with Turkmenistan or Pakistan but it can also pursue trade with them via Afghanistan.

He expressed hope the new government in Iran would pay serious attention to the export of technical and engineering services while currently such an attention is missed in the government's programs.

Salehi Javid also expressed hope the next government would create a better banking relation with the neighboring states in order that Iranian contractors can have colorful presence in countries for reconstructions or developing infrastructures. He also said neighboring countries have many projects in the pipeline and he expects Iran to account for 10 percent of \$1,000b of exports of its neighboring states while currently the figure stands at less than 2 percent.

## Iran, Pakistan Consult on Electricity Cooperation

ISLAMABAD (IRNA) - Chairman of Pakistan's Senate says Tehran and Islamabad have always cooperated with each other at various regional and international forums and have common positions on many issues.

An official statement said Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani expressed these views during a meeting with Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini who called on him at the Parliament House on Friday.

Sanjrani, while emphasizing on strengthening parliamentary ties, trade cooperation and bilateral economic relations between Pakistan and Iran, said that both countries are working for development and prosperity of the region.

The meeting took place just before a visit by Pakistan's Senate Chairman to Iran, which Sanjrani considered important and stressed that his future visit to Tehran is a big step towards strengthening friendly relations between the two countries.

He is scheduled to attend the oath taking ceremony of President-elect of Iran on behalf of the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan. A delegation of Pakistani parliamentarians will also accompany the Chairman Senate.

During the meeting Sanjrani said religious, cultural



and social similarities between the two countries provide a solid foundation for promoting bilateral cooperation.

The Chairman Senate said that international cooperation between the two countries is commendable and Pakistan attaches great importance to its historic relations with

Iran and we wish to further strengthen these relations at the political, social and economic levels.

He said that Pakistan and Iran have always cooperated with each other in international forums and have taken a common stand on various issues.

He also termed the cooperation at the defense level as ideal. Ambassador Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini agreed with the Chairman senate and said that bilateral cooperation between the two countries needs to be further strengthened.

In the meeting, the latest developments related to the cooperation between the two countries in the field of energy, including the export of electricity from Iran to various regions in Balochistan were also discussed.

Chairman Senate also appreciated the support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the development of the port of Gwadar and the electricity transmission project to the Makran region of Balochistan province.

## 6,402 Foreign Movies to Compete at Tehran Int'l Film Festival

TEHRAN (MNA) – According to the Iranian Youth Cinema Society (IYCS), by July 22, 6,402 foreign movies are to compete at the 38th edition of the Tehran International Short Film Fest.

The short film festival is one of the oldest short film festivals not only in Iran but also in the region. The festival has been the host of international well-known festival directors and cineastes from around the world.

Tehran Short Film Festival is a member of the International Short Film Conference (ISFC).

On July 4, the Academy Awards agreed to register the Tehran International Short Film Festival as an event whose awards can qualify a film for the Oscars.

Egypt in North Africa and Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and India are the sole countries having Oscar-qualifying festivals.

This year, the event will be held from October 19 to 24, 2021.

## Iran Unveils Carpet Books, Women Handicrafts

TEHRAN (IP) - The unveiling ceremony of seven Iranian educational, research, and skill carpet books and women entrepreneurs works in handicraft was held today with Iran's Ambassador to Kenya Jafar Barmaki in attendance at IRIB Radio Office in Tehran.

Attending the ceremony, Head of Tehran International Studies and Research Institute, Abed Akbari, noted that culture is an international tool to extend ties between

either one or more nations and governments.

"Knowing no borders, cultural diplomacy is a tool for peace and facilitates international relations, and also lets people promote their ideology, art, and culture," he stated.

"As an influential tool, art is soft power and a precious asset for all nations in the world to set relations," Akbari noted.

## IME Enjoys 150% Weekly Trade Growth

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK**

TEHRAN – Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed last week the trade of 895,813 tons of various types of commodities with a total trading value of more than \$290m, showing an increase

of 122% and 150% in volume and value of trades respectively compared to the previous week.

According to a report by the IME's international affairs and PR, the exchange sold 611,807 tons of commodities worth more than \$124m on its metals and minerals trading floor.

Commodities traded on this floor included 59,677 tons of steel, 6,030 tons of copper, 5,450 tons of aluminum, 120 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 30 tons of precious metals concentrate, 540 tons of zinc ingots, 506,960 tons of cement, 30,000 tons of iron ore, 1 kg of gold bars and 3,000 tons of sponge iron (DRI).

Furthermore, the IME saw trade of 282,690 tons of commodities valued at more than \$165m on the domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor.

On this floor, customers purchased 58,150 tons of vacuum bottom, 56,687 tons of bitumen, 74,730 tons of polymeric products, 36,229 tons of chemicals, 47,000 tons of lube cut, 4,981 tons of base oil, 20 tons of argon, 2,000 tons of slops wax, 210 tons of insulation and 2,225 tons of sulfur.

Also, 1,551 tons of commodities changed hands on the IME's side market within the same week.



### Car Manufacturing Rises 11% In 4 Months on Year



TEHRAN (MNA) - Car manufacturing by Iran's major carmakers rose 11.2 percent during the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21- July 22), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, the data released by Codal website showed.

Three major carmakers, namely Iran Khodro Company (IKCO), SAIPA Group, and Pars Khodro, manufactured 289,311 vehicles during the first four months of this year, rising from 260,235 cars manufactured in the same time span of the past year.

During the said four months, IKCO manufactured 145,045 vehicles, registering a rise of 37.7 percent compared to the same period last year. SAIPA manufactured 109,258 vehicles in the mentioned period, 7.2 percent less than the figure for the four-month period of the previous year.

Pars Khodro also manufactured 35,008 vehicles in the period under review, 5.6 percent lower than the figure for the same time span of the past year.

Three mentioned major Iranian carmakers, IKCO, SAIPA, and Pars Khodro, had manufactured 900,714 vehicles in the previous year (ended on March 20), which was 4.3 percent more than the figure of its preceding year.

According to Codal data, during the past year, IKCO manufactured 480,338 vehicles, which was 21.9 percent more than the output in its preceding year, which was 393,812 vehicles. SAIPA manufactured 317,321 vehicles, with a 12.6-percent fall from 363,379 vehicles manufactured in 1398. And Pars Khodro manufactured 103,055 vehicles in the past year, showing a 2.8-percent drop from the output of its previous year, which was 106,072 vehicles.

Iranian Industry, Mining, and Trade Ministry's programs for the current Iranian calendar year show that the manufacturing of 1.2 million cars has been put on the agenda. According to the Industry Ministry data, since Iranian automakers had produced 984,200 such vehicles in the previous calendar year, the country's car output is planned to increase by over 21 percent in the current year.

The production of 8,968 buses, minibuses, and vans is also planned for the current year, which would be an increase of 378 percent in this sector. Last year, domestic automakers managed to produce only 1,873 units of such vehicles.

## Chadormalu, the Engine of Yazd Province Economy

**IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC NEWS**

TEHRAN – It can be said Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Company is one of the pioneers in the field of completing the steel value chain which enjoys a considerable position in the national economy.



The head of financial and economic office of Chadormalu Company Eng. Farhad Azarinfar in an interview revealed the reasons behind successive achievements and growing trend of successes of the company.

He referred to this point that Chadormalu Company with having one of the biggest mines of Yazd Province has influenced considerably the economy and jobs in this area, adding that existence of big and valuable mines like Chadormalu in this area has turned Yazd to one of the mining provinces of the country as currently the mines and mining industrial plays an important role in the economy of this province and has high share of GDP of Yazd Province. He also said that most of jobs of citizens and people of this province either directly or indirectly relate to this sector.

Azarinfar went on to say that one of the actions of the company for developing the capacities of mining industry and creating value added is to have sustainable provision of raw material, adding that companies can only materialize their strategies of boosting production after being guaranteed of providing raw material easily, therefor investment in exploration and discovery can be considered as one of the important factors in creating value added.

He added to this end, Chadormalu Company has been able to act successfully in the issues of discovery as the first link of steel value chain and the most important guarantees for resolving challenges in way of providing raw material.

Azarinfar went on to say that appropriate adopted strategies by the company have helped the company to overcome the international sanctions and to boost its exports as well as implementing the developmental projects and creating new units.

He reiterated that due to these actions, the value added in this company has soared from 19,817b rials in 7 years ago to 194,295b rials last year.

He noted that today Chadormalu Company has turned into a key player and determining economic enterprise in the economy of Yazd and a considerable share of the GDP of Yazd Province belongs to this company.



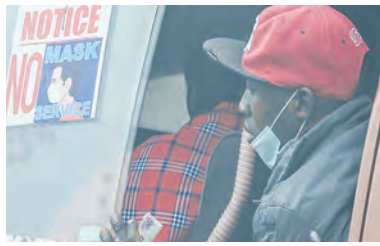
## Kenya Extends Curfew as Covid Cases Surge

NAIROBI (Dispatches) - Kenya said it is extending a nighttime curfew and banning public gatherings to slow the spread of Covid-19, warning that hospitals were becoming overwhelmed.

The East African country has in recent days witnessed a jump in cases from the Delta variant, with a positivity rate of 14 percent as of Friday compared to around seven percent last month.

Health Minister Mutahi Kagwe said the rate was at risk of rising further unless serious measures were taken.

"We continue to implore all Kenyans, including those who have received their Covid-19 vaccines, not to let their guard down," Kagwe said after a meeting of the National Emergency Response Committee on Coronavirus.



## Lebanon President Ready to Answer Questions on Beirut Blast

BEIRUT (Dispatches) - Lebanon's President Michel Aoun told the country's public prosecutor on Friday he was ready to give a statement about last year's port blast in the capital Beirut if needed.

"No one is above the law no matter how high up, and justice can only be achieved through the specialized judicial branches that provide guarantees," Aoun told prosecutor Ghassan Ouidat during a meeting, according to a statement released by the president's office.

The Aug. 4 explosion at the port, caused by a huge quantity of ammonium nitrate stored unsafely for years, killed over 200 people, injured thousands and destroyed large swathes of the capital.



## Asian Nations Impose Stricter COVID-19 Restrictions



SINGAPORE (Dispatches) - Asian countries from Australia to Japan and the Philippines announced tighter COVID-19 restrictions on Friday, as they battle worsening coronavirus outbreaks, driven by the more contagious Delta variant.

Detected in some 96 countries, the Delta variant, first identified in India, has become a concern globally, prompting even countries with advanced vaccination programs such as the United States, Israel and Singapore to re-impose some restrictions.

But it is having a bigger impact on Asia where many countries are battling record cases now, as the region's low vaccination rates have left hundreds of millions of people exposed to the highly transmissible variant.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has described Delta to be as contagious as chickenpox and could cause severe illness, the New York Times reported, citing an internal CDC document.

The variant was also more likely to break through protections afforded by the vaccines, the report said, adding that the agency's reversal on guidelines for whether fully vaccinated Americans should wear masks was based on this document.

"We know from the research that it (Delta) has a viral load 1,000 times higher than previous variants, that's why we see more cases because it transmits more easily and faster," Dicky Budiman, an epidemiologist from Griffith University in Queensland, told Reuters.

He said Delta appears to cause more severe symptoms, especially regarding breathing difficulties.

Already under a lockdown, Sydney is now facing its toughest measures yet, including mandatory testing in the worst affected suburbs, as the infection numbers held persistently high five weeks since restrictions began. From Monday, army personnel will help police in Australia's biggest city check that people who have tested positive for the virus are isolating.

The Philippines announced a plan on Friday to put the Manila capital region, a sprawl of 16 cities and home to more than 13 million people, in lockdown for two weeks to contain the spread of Delta and to shield the country's medical system. India reported on Friday its highest number of daily cases in three weeks, the latest evidence of a worrying trend of rising cases that has forced one state to lock down amid fears of another wave of infections.

In Japan, the government on Friday proposed states of emergency through the end of August in three prefectures near Olympic host Tokyo and the western prefecture of Osaka, as COVID-19 cases spike to records, overshadowing the Summer Games.

"Infections are broadening. The situation is extremely severe," Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura said, warning infections have not yet reached a peak, judging by the increased movement of people and high number of Delta cases among those testing positive for the virus.

## Airlift Begins for Afghans Who Worked for U.S.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Some 200 Afghans were set to begin new lives in the United States on Friday as an airlift got under way for translators and others who risk Taliban retaliation because they worked for the United States during its 20-year war in Afghanistan, U.S. officials said.

The operation to evacuate U.S.-affiliated Afghans and family members comes as the U.S. troop pullout nears completion and government forces struggle to repulse Taliban advances. The first planeload of 200 evacuees arrived at Fort Lee, a military base in Virginia, for final paperwork processing and medical examinations.

The Afghans are being granted Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) entitling them to bring their families. As many as 50,000 or more people ultimately could be evacuated in "Operation Allies Refuge".

"These arrivals are just the first of many as we work quickly to relocate SIV-eligible Afghans out of harm's way — to the United States, to U.S. facilities abroad, or to third countries — so that they can wait in safety while they finish their visa applications," President Joe Biden said in a statement.



## Two Crew Killed in Attack on Israeli-Managed Tanker Off Oman

LONDON (Dispatches) - Two crew members, a Briton and a Romanian, were killed when a petroleum products tanker managed by Israeli-owned Zodiac Maritime came under attack on Thursday off Oman's coast, the company said on Friday.

London-based Zodiac said on its website that the attack in the Arabian Sea on the Mercer Street, a Liberian-flagged Japanese-owned ship, was still being investigated.

Earlier on Friday it had described the incident as suspected piracy but the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), which provides maritime security information, says it was not piracy. "Details of the incident are still being established and an investigation into the incident is currently underway. We continue to work closely with the UKMTO and other relevant authorities," said Zodiac, which is owned by the wealthy Israeli Ofer family.

It said it was "not aware of harm to any other personnel" than the British and Romanian crew members who were killed. The UKMTO said the vessel was about 152 nautical miles (280 km) northeast of the Omani port of Duqm when it was attacked. It gave no more details on the type of vessel, any cargo, to whom it belonged or about possible casualties. In an advisory note, UKMTO said it had been informed that regional search and rescue authorities and coalition forces have been tasked to assist the vessel.

According to Refinitiv ship tracking, the Mercer Street, a medium-size tanker, was headed to Fujairah, a bunkering port and oil terminal in the United Arab Emirates, from Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania. In a statement to Al Jazeera later on Friday, a UK Ministry of Defense spokesperson said: "We are aware of reports of an attack on a merchant vessel off the coast of Oman. UK military headquarters in the region are currently conducting investigations."

The ministry had earlier misidentified the ship's owners. Oman did not immediately acknowledge the attack, while there was no comment by Israeli officials.

Tensions have risen in the Gulf region since the United States re-imposed sanctions on Iran in 2018 after then-President Donald Trump withdrew Washington from Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with major powers.

## Four Killed as Wildfires Sweep Turkey

ANKARA (Dispatches) - The death toll from wildfires on Turkey's southern coast has risen to four and firefighters were battling blazes for a third day on Friday after the evacuation of dozens of villages and some hotels.

More than 70 wildfires have broken out this week in provinces on Turkey's Aegean and Mediterranean coasts as well as inland areas, President Tayyip Erdogan said, adding that 14 were still burning.

Planes from Russia and Ukraine helped battle the flames and another from Azerbaijan was joining them. "As of midday, with the arrival of the planes, we are turning in a positive direction," Erdogan told reporters after Friday prayers.

Forestry Minister Bekir Pakdemirli said fires raged on in six provinces and officials promised to bring to account anyone found responsible for starting them.

Villages and some hotels have been evacuated in tourist areas and television footage has shown people fleeing across fields as fires closed in on their homes.

Pakdemirli said fires were still blazing in the Mediterranean resort region of Antalya and the Aegean resort province of Mugla. "We were hoping to contain some of the fires as of this morning but while we say cautiously that they are improving,

we still cannot say they are under control," he said.

Wildfires have broken out elsewhere in the region, with more than 40 in Greece in the last 24 hours, fanned by winds and soaring temperatures, authorities said. On Tuesday, a blaze tore through a pine forest north of Athens, damaging more than a dozen homes before it was brought under control.

Fires also burned large swathes of pine forest in the mountainous north of Lebanon this week, killing at least one firefighter and forcing some residents to flee.

In Turkey, firefighters on the ground and in helicopters were fighting a blaze that killed three people in Manavgat, 75 km (45 miles) east of Antalya. Urbanisation Minister Murat Kurum said 27 neighbourhoods were evacuated there.

One person was found dead on Thursday in Mugla's Marmaris area, 290 km west of Manavgat. The blaze continued in Marmaris but residential areas were not at risk, Pakdemirli said.

Erdogan said at least five planes, 45 helicopters, drones, and 1,080 firefighting vehicles were involved in firefighting efforts at 1,140 sites.

Istanbul governor's office banned entry to forest areas until the end of August as a precaution against fires.



## Duterte Restores Philippines' Key Military Agreement With U.S.

MANILA (Dispatches) - President Rodrigo Duterte has restored a pact governing the presence of US troops in the Philippines, the two countries' defense secretaries announced on Friday, retracting a decision that had caused increasing concern among policymakers in Washington and Manila.

The Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) provides rules for the rotation of thousands of US troops in and out of the Philippines for war drills and exercises. It has assumed additional importance as the United States and its allies contend with an increasingly assertive China, particularly in the disputed South China Sea.

"Let me thank President Duterte for his decision to fully restore the visiting forces agreement," U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Friday in a joint press briefing with his Philippine counterpart, Delfin Lorenza. Duterte's decision provides the U.S. "some degree of certainty going forward", he said, noting the U.S. role in "counterinsurgency efforts" in the southern island of Mindanao.

"We can plan further in advance and with that long-range planning, we can actually do more comprehensive exercises."

The U.S. Embassy in Manila also welcomed the news saying that the agreement "strengthens not only the security of our two nations, but also the rules-based order" in the region. Duterte said last year that he planned to cancel the VFA but extended it until December.

Lorenzana said he was unsure why Duterte had changed his mind but made the decision after meeting Austin in Manila on Thursday night.

"Our countries face a range of challenges, from the climate crisis to the pandemic," he said, adding that the Philippine-US alliance "will remain vital to the security, stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific."

"A fully restored VFA will help us achieve that goal together."

In a statement on Friday, Duterte's spokesman Harry Roque said the president's decision was "based on upholding the Philippines strategic core interests".

"The Philippines will, however, continue to engage other countries for partnerships that work, based on our core national interests."

A separate statement from Duterte's office said the Philippine president and Austin "had an open and frank discussion of the status and future direction" of the Philippine-U.S. ties.







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## Nissan Eyes Return to Annual Profit

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Crisis-hit Japanese carmaker Nissan upgraded its annual outlook Wednesday, projecting a return to the black, after a strong first quarter performance fuelled by a recovery from the impact of the coronavirus crisis.

However, the firm warned that while it was upbeat, there were still headwinds while analysts warned a chip shortage could also pose problems and it faced "a crucial year".

The firm has faced a series of trials in recent years, from weak demand during the pandemic to the fallout from the arrest of former boss Carlos Ghosn, now an international fugitive in Lebanon.



## IMF Warns of Growing Poverty, Unrest, Geopolitical Tensions

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The global economic recovery continues, but with a widening gap between advanced economies and many emerging market and developing economies thanks to vaccine inequity and a lack of fiscal support, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned.

While the latest update to the IMF's World Economic Outlook sees the global economy still growing 6 percent this year – unchanged from its April estimate – Chief Economist Gita Gopinath noted that the composition of the recovery continues to change.

"The recovery is not assured until the pandemic is beaten back globally," Gopinath told reporters during a virtual press conference as she presented the latest outlook titled Fault Lines Widen in the Global Economy. The IMF sees global growth decelerating to 4.9 percent next year. Advanced economies are expected to achieve 4.4 percent growth in 2022 – down from 5.6 percent in 2021 – while growth in emerging and developing economies is seen slowing to 5.2 percent in 2022 from an expected rebound 6.3 percent in 2021.

Rich, emerging and developing nations all took an economic beating last year when the coronavirus pandemic forced governments to close borders, shut businesses and idle manufacturing hubs worldwide.

As countries rolled back COVID restrictions this year, growth forecasts jumped as people emerged from lockdowns and unleashed pent-up demand for products and services. That demand surge though is expected to moderate next year.

Developed economies armed and shielded with a healthy supply of COVID-19 vaccines and fiscal firepower have managed to open up businesses and resume operations. But the emergence of new COVID variants and infection spikes laces uncertainty into the recovery path. Growth in the US, the world's largest economy, is seen slowing to 4.9 percent in 2022 after a bounce back of 7.0 percent expected this year. Europe is also expected to slow to 4.3 percent in 2022 from 4.6 in 2021.

Growth in the Middle East and Central Asia is expected to decelerate to 3.7 percent next year from 4.0 in 2021, while emerging and developing Asian economies are expected to dip more than a point from 7.5 in 2021 to 6.4 in 2022.

Latin America and the Caribbean are forecast to experience the sharpest fall from 5.8 percent in 2021 to 3.2 in 2022 after plummeting 7.0 in 2020.

Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region that is expected to see growth climb – from 3.4 in 2021 to 4.1 percent in 2022. Vaccine inequality is seen as a chief driver of the widening gulf between recoveries in developed and less developed economies.

Close to 40 percent of people in advanced economies have been fully vaccinated compared with only 11 percent in emerging market economies and a tiny fraction in low-income developing countries.

Fresh waves of COVID-19 cases this year, notably in India are a major source of the deepening inequality between rich and poor nations. "The emergence of highly infectious virus variants could derail the recovery and wipe out four and a half trillion dollars cumulatively from global GDP by 2025," Gopinath warned.

To make matters worse, poor countries and even emerging markets lack access to the funds necessary to jolt economies back to health. Advanced economies, on the other hand, passed \$4.6 trillion in fiscal support for 2021 and beyond. In developing economies, most measures expired last year.

## Malaysian SMEs' GDP Shrinks 7.3% in 2020

KUALA LUMPUR (Dispatches) - Malaysia's small and medium enterprises' (SMEs) gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 contracted 7.3%, sharper than the decline in Malaysia's GDP and non-SMEs GDP, which shrank 5.6% and 4.6% respectively, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) chief statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin.

In a statement today, DOSM said the various measures aimed to curb the spread of Covid-19 during the prolonged Covid-19 pandemic health crisis has resulted in the decline of all of Malaysia's economic sectors, and especially SMEs.

Mohd Uzir said the SME sector registered a nominal GDP of RM512.8 billion in 2020, decreasing its contribution as a share of Malaysia's GDP to 38.2% from 38.9% or RM533.5 billion in the preceding year.

"Since 2004, this was the first time the SMEs' performance was lower than Malaysia's GDP and non-SMEs GDP," he noted. He further said SMEs GDP for all sectors contracted in 2020, where SMEs value added for the services sector decreased 9.2% in 2020, from a growth of 7.5% in 2019.

"The sluggish momentum was attributed to the decline in wholesale and retail trade, food and beverages and accommodation sub-sector which posted a negative growth at 7.8%. Finance, insurance, real estate, and business services sub-sector also decreased in 2020 to negative 10.6%," he added.

He noted that SMEs in the construction sector declined 15.4%, contributed by the decline in all its sub-sectors.

"Value added of SMEs for the manufacturing sector registered negative growth of 2.9% influenced by non-metallic mineral products, basic metal and fabricated metal products which plummeted to 13.1%," he added.

However, Mohd Uzir said petroleum, chemical, rubber and plastic products as well as food, beverages and tobacco products continued with positive growth at 3.2% and 2% respectively.

"Value added of SMEs in mining and quarrying sector dropped to 7.1% in 2020. In addition, the value added of SMEs in the agriculture sector decreased to 0.3% attributed by a decrease in all sub-sectors except for livestock and other agriculture which continued with positive growth," he added.



## German Consumer Morale Steady Heading Into August

BERLIN (Reuters) - German consumer sentiment held steady heading into August as shoppers grew more ready to spend, but took a less upbeat view on the economic outlook than a month earlier on worries about rising numbers of COVID-19 cases, a survey showed on Wednesday.

The GfK institute said its consumer sentiment index, based on a survey of around 2,000 Germans, was unchanged at -0.3 points. The reading compared with a Reuters forecast for 1.0.

After more than two months of steady decline, COVID-19 cases have been rising since early July, due mainly to the spread of the more infectious Delta variant.

"This is currently preventing a further significant increase in consumer sentiment," GfK consumer expert Rolf Buerkl said in a statement, but he added that the domestic economy would make a positive contribution to growth in the second half of the year. Roughly 60% of Germany's 83 million people have had a first shot of a COVID-19 vaccine and about half are fully vaccinated.

A separate survey published on Monday showed German business morale fell unexpectedly in July on continuing supply chain worries and amid rising coronavirus infections, posting its first decline since January.

The consumer climate indicator forecasts the development of real private consumption in the following month.

An indicator reading above zero signals year-on-year growth in private consumption. A value below zero indicates a drop compared with the same period a year ago. According to GfK, a one-point change in the indicator corresponds to a year-on-year change of 0.1% in private consumption.

## Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to Strengthen Economic Ties

ISLAMABAD (Dispatches) - Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have agreed to expand the time-tested partnership by developing economic linkages during the Saudi foreign minister's visit to Islamabad.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, who is on a one-day visit to Pakistan, said that the two sides had "very fruitful discussions" on bilateral matters. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia would explore new opportunities "to expand that relationship beyond traditional areas...into much broader investment and cooperation."

Prince Faisal said his government would encourage businessmen of both countries to explore opportunities for investment in areas such as technology.

Later in the day, Saudi foreign minister called on Prime Minister Imran Khan who stressed to explore new avenues of cooperation and strengthen economic partnership in diverse areas including trade, investment and energy. Discussing regional issues, PM Khan emphasised the need for constructive engagement among the Afghan parties to reach a negotiated political settlement, which was critically important for peace and stability in the region.

Addressing a joint press conference, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that the two countries have established the Saudi-Pakistan Supreme Coordination Council (SPSCC) focused on enhancing economic partnership to take the decades-old relationship to a new level. The forum would help "create economic linkages through enhancement of bilateral trade and promotion of investments."

FM Qureshi also highlighted the transformational CPEC project and vast opportunities for Saudi investors in the special economic zones (SEZs). The two sides agreed to closely work to further strengthen bilateral relations with a particular focus on trade, investments, energy, the environment, and culture. Regional and international issues were also discussed, especially the Afghanistan situation.

Pakistani foreign minister also took up the issue of over 400,000 Pakistani workers stranded back home due to COVID-19 travel restrictions and vaccine issues. "They are facing challenges... the travel restrictions and the issues of vaccination," he said.

Saudi foreign minister said his country is working to ease travel restrictions. Prince Faisal also appreciated the contributions of the Pakistani community towards the development of Saudi Arabia, adding that the Saudi government had given COVID-19 jabs to 1.7 million Pakistani workers. Over two million Pakistani workforce in Saudi Arabia contributed \$7 billion of the total \$29 billion remittances the country received in the last fiscal year.

## IMF Cuts Japan's Growth Forecast To 2.8% in 2021

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday forecast that Japan's economy will grow 2.8% in 2021 from a year before, down 0.5 percentage point from its April estimate as the country continues to struggle to contain the spread of COVID-19.

The global growth projection remained unchanged at 6.0%, as dimmed prospects for Japan and emerging economies such as China and India were offset by improved outlooks for the United States and some other major advanced economies.

In an update of the World Economic Outlook report, the Washington-based institution highlighted the continuing divergence of economic recoveries from the pandemic due to differences in the pace of COVID-19 vaccine rollouts and policy support.

"Vaccine access has emerged as the principal fault line along which the global recovery splits into two blocs," the IMF said, drawing a distinction between countries that can expect further normalization of activity later this year — almost all advanced economies — and those that will face resurgent infections and rising deaths from the pandemic.

"The recovery, however, is not assured even in countries where infections are currently very low so long as the virus circulates elsewhere," it added, warning of the highly contagious delta variant that is pushing up the number of cases in many parts of the world.

Japan was the only country among the Group of Seven industrialized nations that faced a downgrade in the IMF's latest economic outlook. The country's vaccine rollout

initially lagged those of other developed countries, and it has imposed anti-virus business restrictions amid a rise in infection cases.

But the world's third-largest economy is anticipated to see a stronger rebound in the second half of 2021, supported by further inoculation efforts. The IMF raised its growth outlook for 2022 by 0.5 point to 3.0%.

## IMF Cuts India's GDP Growth Forecast to 9.5% for FY22



WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday cut its economic growth forecast for India to 9.5% for the fiscal year to March 31, 2022 as the onset of a severe second COVID-19 wave cut into recovery momentum.

This forecast for 2021-22 is lower than the 12.5% growth in GDP that IMF had projected in April before the second wave took a grip.

For 2022-23, IMF expects economic growth of 8.5%, larger than the 6.9% it had projected in April.

"Growth prospects in India have been downgraded following the severe second COVID wave during March-May and expected slow recovery in confidence from that setback," IMF said in its latest World Economic Outlook (WEO).

India's economy is gradually recovering from a deep contraction in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2021 (7.3%) and a subsequent severe second wave of COVID-19.

IMF joins a host of global and domestic agencies which have cut India's growth estimates for the current fiscal. Last month, S&P Global Ratings projected a 9.5 % GDP growth in the current fiscal and 7.8 % in 2022-23.

While World Bank sees GDP growth at 8.3 % from April 2021 to March 2022, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) last week downgraded India's economic growth forecast to 10 % from 11 % estimated in April.

Another U.S.-based rating agency Moody's has projected India clocking 9.3 % growth in the current fiscal ending March 2022. For 2021 calendar year, Moody's has cut the growth estimate sharply to 9.6 %.

The GDP, which shrank from \$2.87 trillion in 2019-20 to \$2.66 trillion in the following year, is estimated to reach around \$4 trillion in 2024-25.

Overall, the global economy is projected to grow 6 % in 2021 and 4.9 % in 2022. The 2021 global growth forecast is unchanged from the April 2021 WEO, but with offsetting revisions, the report said.

"The global economic recovery continues, but with a widening gap between advanced economies and many emerging markets and developing economies.

"Our latest global growth forecast of 6% for 2021 is unchanged from the previous outlook, but the composition has changed," IMF's Chief Economist Gita Gopinath said in a blog post released along with the WEO.



## Persepolis Claim IPL Title For Fifth Successive Time

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Persepolis have been crowned champions of Iran for a 5th time in a row, after securing a 2-0 win at Paykan.

The red army launched the fireworks early on, with Mehdi Abdi tapping in from a low cross by Mehdi Torabi, after just 8 minutes of play.

Ahmad Nourollahi gave Persepolis a breathing space with a close range effort in the 21st minute, as the Reds preserved a clean sheet in the 2nd half, to lift the trophy. Sepahan finished 2nd ahead of Esteghlal.



## Risk of Vaccine-Resistant Variants Highest When Most Jabbed

PARIS (Dispatches) - Relaxing restrictions like mask-wearing and social distancing when most people have been vaccinated greatly increases the risk of vaccine-resistant variants of the virus that causes Covid-19, new research showed on Friday.

At a time when nearly 60 percent of Europeans have received at least one vaccine dose, the authors said their modelling study showed the need to maintain non-vaccination measures until everyone is fully jabbed.

To predict how the SARS-CoV-2 virus might mutate in response to vaccination campaigns, a pan-European team of experts simulated the probability of a vaccine-resistant strain emerging in a population of 10 million people over three years.

Variables included vaccination, mutation and transmission rates -- including recurring "waves" of infections and falls in cases in response to lockdowns.

Predictably, the model showed that a rapid rate of vaccination reduced the risk of a resistant strain emerging.

But in what the authors called a "counterintuitive result", the model showed that the highest risk of resistant strains emerging came when a large proportion of the population was vaccinated, but not large enough to ensure herd immunity.

This is in essence where much of Europe is currently, where the Delta variant is spreading rapidly.

The authors said the model showed a threshold of 60 percent of the population vaccinated, after which resistant variants were more likely to occur.

"Vaccines are our best bet to beat this pandemic" said co-author Simon Rella, from Austria's Institute of Science and Technology (IST).

"What our model showed is that when most people are vaccinated, the vaccine-resistant strain has an advantage over the original strain.

"This means that the vaccine-resistant strain spreads through the population faster than the original strain at a time when most people are vaccinated," Rella told journalists in an online briefing.

Authors said that their research highlighted the need to maintain other anti-Covid measures until everyone is vaccinated.



"Of course we hope that vaccine-resistance does not evolve over the course of this pandemic, but we urge caution," said Fyodor Kondrashov, a IST researcher and study co-author.

"Evolution is a very powerful force and maintaining some reasonable precautions throughout the whole vaccination period may actually be a good tool to control this evolution."

Currently just over one billion people around the world are fully vaccinated against Covid-19, with many countries -- particularly in Africa and South America -- yet to start widespread rollouts due to lack of supply.

"Without global coordination, vaccine resistant strains may be eliminated in some populations but could persist in others," said the study, published in Nature Scientific Reports.

"Thus, a truly global vaccination effort may be necessary to reduce the chances of a global spread of a resistant strain."

## Migrants Account for More Than Half of Trafficked persons in world-UN Chief



TEHRAN (UNIC) - United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his message on World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, 30 July 2021, while announcing that migrants account for more than half of those trafficked in most regions, urged governments to take urgent steps to strengthen prevention, support victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

According to the United Nations Information Center (UNIC) in Tehran, the UN Secretary-General in his message said that in the midst of a global pandemic, accompanied by rising inequalities and economic devastation, the voices of human trafficking survivors and victims risk being drowned out, but listening to their stories is more crucial than ever as the COVID-19 crisis increases fragilities and drives up desperation.

### *The full text of his message reads:*

As many as 124 million more people have been pushed into extreme poverty by the pandemic, leaving many millions vulnerable to trafficking.

Children are at great and growing risk: they represent one-third of victims globally — a share that has tripled in the last 15 years. Half of victims in low-income countries are children, most of whom are trafficked for forced labor. Criminals everywhere are using technology to identify, control and exploit vulnerable people. Children are increasingly targeted through online platforms for sexual exploitation, forced marriage and other forms of abuse.

Trafficking in women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation continues to be one of the most widespread and abhorrent forms of human trafficking. Migrants account for more than half of those trafficked in most regions.

Migrants account for more than half of trafficked persons in world-UN Chief

Governments must take urgent steps to strengthen prevention, support victims and bring perpetrators to justice. This includes implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons.

Our efforts must be guided by survivors of trafficking. Their contribution is essential to address risk factors and patterns, and to identify and protect victims and ensure their access to justice and recovery, while holding their exploiters accountable.

The United Nations is committed to listening and responding to the voices of victims and survivors of human trafficking, ensuring their rights and dignity, amplifying their stories and learning from them in our fight to prevent and put an end to this terrible crime.

## Japan's Output, Job Availability Jump

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's factory output jumped in June and job availability rose to the highest level in nearly a year, data showed, a sign robust overseas demand was offsetting the drag to consumption from the coronavirus pandemic.

But a spike in domestic infections to new records and a lingering global chip shortage add to woes for the world's third largest-economy, dashing policymakers' hopes for a strong rebound in July-September growth, analysts say.

The government is set to expand state of emergency curbs to more parts of the country through Aug. 31, overshadowing the Olympic Games held in capital city Tokyo.

"With the resurgence in infections, initial hopes of a clear economic rebound in July-September have faded," said Yoshiaki Shinke, chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute. "The economy will probably stagnate in the current quarter with any recovery pushed back until October-December onward."

Industrial output rose 6.2% in June after a sharp 6.5% drop in May, data showed on Friday, marking the highest growth since July last year and recovering to pre-pandemic levels.

The increase, which exceeded a median market forecast for a 5.0% gain, was driven mainly by a 22.6% surge in auto production as manufacturers sought to make up for the slump in May.

Manufacturers surveyed by the government expect output to fall 1.1% in July but rise 1.7% in August, a sign robust global demand for machinery and cars will underpin Japan's recovery.



Japan's job market remains tight. An index gauging job availability rose to 1.13 from 1.09 in May, exceeding market estimates for a 1.10 reading and marking the highest level since May last year. The jobless rate fell to 2.9% from 3.0% in May.

Underscoring the fragile state of consumption, however, retail sales were up just 0.1% in June from a year earlier, compared with a median market forecast for a 0.2% gain.

Some analysts are marking down their growth estimates for the current quarter, reflecting the planned expanded state of emergency curbs.

SMBC Nikko Securities said it now expects Japan's economy to grow an annualised 1.5% in July-September, well below its previous forecast of a 7.8% expansion.

Former Bank of Japan policymaker Takahide Kiuchi also expects the economy to grow around 2-3% in the current quarter instead of the initially projected double-digit expansion.

With the expected expansion, the state of emergency curbs could lead to a total loss of 2.19 trillion yen (\$20 billion) for Japan's economy, offsetting an estimated 1.67 trillion yen benefit from the Olympic Games, said Kiuchi, who is currently executive economist at Nomura Research Institute. "The economic boost from the Games will be completely wiped out from the expanded curbs," he said in a research note.

Japan's economy shrank an annualized 3.9% in January-March and likely barely grew in the second quarter, as the pandemic took a toll on service spending.

## Biden Wants U.S Automakers to Pledge 40% Electric Vehicles by 2030

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The White House has told U.S. automakers it wants them to back a voluntary pledge of at least 40% of new vehicles sales being electric by 2030 as it works to reduce greenhouse gas pollution, sources briefed on the matter said.

The administration is set as early as next week to roll out proposed revisions to vehicle emissions standards through 2026. Sources said a voluntary electric vehicle (EV) target could be as high as 50% but emphasized that no agreement with automakers has been reached and many details remain under discussion, including whether that pledge will include various types of gasoline-electric hybrids.

United Auto Workers spokesman (UAW) Brian Rothenberg said a published report was inaccurate "that we have agreed to 40% EVs by 2030. The UAW is still in discussions and has not reached agreement at this point." The UAW has opposed EV mandates, warning it could put some jobs at risk.

This month, Stellantis, parent company of Fiat Chrysler, said it was targeting over 40% of U.S. vehicles be low emission by 2030. Stellantis declined to comment on Thursday.

General Motors Co declined to comment on the talks. It has said it aspires to end sales of new U.S. gasoline-powered light duty vehicles by 2035. The White House declined to comment on the discussions. Ford Motor Co did not comment on the discussions but noted it has said it plans "at least 40% of our global vehicle volume being all-electric by 2030."

The Biden administration has resisted calls from many Democrats to set a binding target for EV adoption or to follow California in setting 2035 as a date to phase out the sale of new gasoline-powered light duty vehicles.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are reviewing former President Donald Trump's March 2020 rollback of fuel economy standards. Trump required 1.5% annual increases in efficiency

through 2026, well below the 5% yearly boosts set in 2012 by President Barack Obama's administration. Biden's proposed rules, which would cover 2023-2026, are expected to be similar in overall vehicle emissions reductions to California's 2019 deal with some automakers that aims to improve fuel economy 3.7% annually, sources told Reuters.

The 2026 requirements are expected to exceed the Obama-era 5% annual improvements. In March, a group of 71 Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives urged Biden to set tough emissions rules to ensure that 60% of new passenger cars and trucks sold are zero-emission by 2030.

The United States pledged at a global climate summit this year to reduce emissions 50% to 52% by 2030, compared with 2005 levels.



Zarif...

FROM PAGE 1

"The Biden administration—again, aided and abetted by the E3—has since its inauguration in January 2021 continued Trump's economic terrorism against Iranians as supposed 'leverage' to achieve the same objectives," Zarif wrote in his letter.

For their part, the chief Iranian diplomat continued, the EU/E3 remained politically committed to the JCPOA and initially took a measured and mild diplomatic stance against the unlawful US withdrawal from the JCPOA and its re-imposition of sanctions.

"However, as it became gradually clear to the EU/E3 that they were incapable of performing their own obligations under the JCPOA and commitments undertaken following the US's withdrawal at the highest level, they sought to conceal their multiple cases of significant non-performance by calling for a "Trump deal," in clear violation of Paragraphs 28 and 29 of the JCPOA, and Operative Paragraph 2 of UNSCR 2231 (2015)," he added.

Elsewhere in his letter, Zarif said the Iranian government and people have made enormous sacrifices to preserve the JCPOA in spite of U.S. contempt for it and EU/E3 complacency in the face of that contempt.

"As history has shown, the Iranian people have throughout the course of their millennia-old and glorious civilization triumphed over intimidation, coercion or extortion," he stated.

Zarif added, "At the same time, today, the Islamic Republic of Iran remains prepared to reciprocally contribute to serious efforts to revive the full implementation of the JCPOA by all in an atmosphere of good faith, equal footing and mutual respect."

Raid on...

FROM PAGE 1

"Details of the incident are still being established and an investigation into the incident is currently underway. We continue to work closely with the UKMTO and other relevant authorities," London-based Zodiac said on its website.

It also said it was "not aware of harm to any other personnel" than the British and Romanian crewmen who were allegedly killed.

According to Refinitiv ship tracking, the medium-size tanker was headed to Fujairah, a port and oil terminal in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), from Tanzania. Earlier on Friday, the firm described the incident as suspected piracy, but the UKMTO categorized it as not piracy-related.

The company said the vessel was now sailing under the control of its crew and on its own power to a safe location with a U.S. naval escort.

In recent months, several other Israeli ships have come under apparent attacks on various maritime routes across the world. Earlier in the month, a fire broke out on an Israeli-owned cargo ship after it was struck by an "unidentified weapon" in the northern Indian Ocean. Lebanon's al-Mayadeen television network said the Israeli vessel had been on route to the coast of the UAE when it was attacked.

Back in February, an Israeli-owned ship was hit by an explosion in the sea of Oman. In April, another Israeli ship came under attack off the coast of the UAE.

The attacks come against a backdrop of the Israeli regime's various assaults on cargo ships across the Persian Gulf region and elsewhere.



## West Ham Sign PSG Goalkeeper Areola on Loan

LONDON (Dispatches) - West Ham have signed goalkeeper LAlphonse Areola on loan from Paris Saint-Germain, the English Premier League club announced Thursday.

The 28-year-old France international's deal will see him stay with the Hammers on an initial season-long move but with the option to make his switch permanent after the end of the campaign.

Areola spent last season with fellow London club Fulham and will now compete with Lukasz Fabianski to be West Ham's first-choice goalkeeper.

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## McKeon Sets Olympic Record

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Australian Emma McKeon set an Olympic record in the women's 50 meters freestyle heats and Caeleb Dressel advanced fastest in the men's sprint, as he braces for a brutal morning of racing in Tokyo where two gold medals could be up for grabs.

Lifted by her 100m freestyle gold earlier in the day, McKeon qualified first in a Games record of 24.02, with Rio Olympics champion Pernille Blume of Denmark 0.10 behind.

# Zverev Stuns Djokovic to Play Khachanov for Gold

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Novak Djokovic's run for the gold came to an end Friday in an upset loss to German Alexander Zverev in the semifinals at the Tokyo Olympics.

Things looked promising for Djokovic early, as he dominated Zverev in the first set 6-1. Djokovic started to lose ground in the second set, but was still ahead 3-2 after five games. That's when Zverev took over. Zverev took the next four games, winning the set 6-3 and forcing a third set. It was the first time during the Olympics Djokovic lost a set.

Zverev looked dominant from there. He took the first 4 games of the final set. Djokovic showed signs of life late, winning the fifth game, but Zverev wouldn't allow Djokovic to come back. Zverev took game the sixth game, putting himself a game away from the upset.

Zverev capitalized on some early errors by Djokovic in the seventh game to win the match. It was a dominating finish by Zverev, who took nine of the last 10 games against Djokovic.

Following the win, Zverev broke down in tears on the court after the win. Zverev explained why he was emotional following the match, saying it's been impossible for anyone to beat Djokovic this year. Zverev also called Djokovic "the greatest of all time."

The win moves Zverev into the finals, where he'll take on Karen Khachanov of the Russian Olympic Committee. Djokovic will play Spain's Pablo Carreño Busta for the bronze medal.

Djokovic can still take home a gold medal in mixed doubles, where he'll play in the quarterfinals with Nina Stojanovic on Friday.



Golden Slam hopes alive with a win at the Olympics.

Meanwhile Russian Karen Khachanov set up an Olympic men's singles final against Alexander Zverev by overpowering Pablo Carreno Busta in the last four on Friday.

The 12th seed, a former top-10 player who has struggled for consistency in the last three seasons, produced an impressive display in Tokyo to dispatch Carreno Busta 6-3, 6-3.

Khachanov is bidding to become the first Russian champion in the men's singles since Yevgeny Kafelnikov struck gold in Sydney 21 years ago.

Khachanov started strongly and took control with a break in the fifth game before capping an excellent first set with another in game nine, hitting 10 winners and making just four unforced errors.

He carried that momentum into the early stages of the second, but Carreno Busta managed to stave off a break point in the opening game.

That appeared to give the sixth seed confidence and he brought up his first break point at 2-2 with a rasping inside-out forehand.

But he missed his chance, hitting into the net cord and Khachanov went on to hold serve.

## Rashford To Have Shoulder Surgery



LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford is to undergo shoulder surgery, the Premier League giants announced Friday, and could now miss the opening months of the new season.

The 23-year-old has long had shoulder trouble, nursing the injury for much of last season and during his involvement in Euro 2020, where Rashford was one of several England players who missed a penalty in a shootout loss to Italy in the final.

But he could now be out of action until October at the earliest, with a United statement saying: "Following consultation between Marcus, the manager, club medical staff and specialists, Marcus will undergo surgery imminently to resolve his shoulder injury."

"He will now focus on his rehabilitation in order to return as soon as possible."

United begin their Premier League season at home to Leeds on August 14, and it could be that Rashford also misses up to five World Cup qualifiers with England.

Rashford, speaking about his fitness during the Euros last month, accepted he had not been in peak form during the second half of a 2020/21 season where United finished as runners-up to Premier League champions and local rivals Manchester City.

## Mektic and Pavic Win Tennis Men's Doubles Gold

TOKYO (Reuters) - Croatia's Nikola Mektic and Mate Pavic beat compatriots Marin Cilic and Ivan Dodig 6-4 3-6 10-6 in the Olympics men's doubles final to win their country's first ever gold medal in the sport.

The battle between the countrymen also produced Croatia's first silver after three bronze medals at previous Games -- two at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and one at Athens 2004.

New Zealand's Marcus Daniell and Michael Venus won the bronze by beating Austin Krajicek and Tennys Sandgren of the United States 7-6(3) 6-2 to secure their country's first ever Olympic tennis medal.

New Zealander Anthony Wilding had won a bronze medal as part of a combined Australasian team in 1912.

## Van Dijk Returns for Liverpool After Nine Months

LONDON (Dispatches) - Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk returned to action for the first time in nine months in a pre-season friendly on Thursday.

The 30-year-old suffered knee ligament damage in the Merseyside derby against Everton in October.

He subsequently missed the rest of the season as Liverpool were dethroned as Premier League champions as well as the delayed Euro 2020 event. On Thursday, he came on as a 69th-minute substitute in Liverpool's 4-3 friendly defeat to German side Hertha Berlin in Austria.

"It's hard to express how I am feeling, but it's important to me that I say I feel blessed to have had the support of so many incredible people. The surgeon, my physios, coaches and staff who have been with me in my corner since day one," tweeted the Dutchman after the game.

"My teammates for giving me energy and keeping my head up. The fans for their love, support and encouragement. And most of all, my family because without them, I'd be nothing. Thank you. The work doesn't stop now. It's only just starting. We keep going!"



## Man City Makes Premier League Record Offer for Grealish

LONDON (Dispatches) - Manchester City is willing to go to record-breaking lengths to get Jack Grealish. City has reportedly offered \$139 million to Aston Villa for Grealish, according to The Telegraph.

If completed, it would set the record for the most expensive transfer ever in English soccer. The current record belongs to Paul Pogba, who went from Juventus to Manchester United for \$124 million in 2016.

Grealish, 25, is set to return to Villa soon after spending time with England at Euro 2020. While Grealish has rarely started for England, he's become a fan favorite with the team.

Grealish stands to make a significant amount of money no matter what happens next. Villa reportedly offered Grealish a new deal in which he'll make \$174,000 a week, a significant raise.

It didn't take long for Manchester City to flex its financial muscles after their two-season Champions League ban was overturned last July. City was initially handed a two-season ban after violating UEFA's financial fair play regulations. That suspension was eventually overturned, and City paid a fine of 10 million euros, a small price for a lucrative club.

Manchester City is coming off a domestic double last season, winning the Premier League for a fifth time and also lifting the League Cup.

## Ethiopian Barega Wins Shock 10,000m Gold

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Ethiopia's Selemon Barega sprinted the last lap to beat world record holder Joshua Cheptegei of Uganda and win a shock Olympic gold medal in the men's 10,000 meters.

The 21-year old Barega powered down the home straight to cross the line in 27 minutes 43.22 seconds, ahead of world champion Cheptegei in 27:43.63.

Jacob Kiplimo, the youngest ever Ugandan Olympian when he ran the 5,000 heats in Rio as a 15-year old, posted a time of 27:43.88 to secure bronze in the first athletics medal event of the Games.

Barega, the 2019 5,000m world championship silver medallist who set the second fastest 10,000 metres time of the year in June, was applauded by the Ethiopian delegation as he smiled broadly on a victory lap with his country's flag draped around his shoulders.

Cheptegei said he was experiencing mixed emotions.

"I have two feelings. One is that I'm very happy to have won an Olympic silver medal today," he told reporters. "But the other side of me is really not satisfied with the result because I came here expecting to win a gold."

Cheptegei also admitted that 2021 had been tough for him.

"This year was really a very difficult year for me in terms of racing," he said. "It's the year that I have lost all the focus, all the belief. There was a lot of pressure and I was feeling it in every moment."

Uganda's Stephen Kissa acted as the early pacemaker before dropping out a little over halfway through the race.

"We had a plan for me to go ahead to make it a fast race," Kissa told reporters. "I thought they were going to follow me but when I looked round they were not there."



## USA Blank Qatar To Reach Gold Cup Final

NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Gyasi Zardes, left, scores the go-ahead goal during the USA's 1-0 win over Qatar in the Concacaf Gold Cup semi-finals in Texas

United States substitute Gyasi Zardes scored in the 86th minute and Matt Turner stopped four shots as the Americans blanked Asian champions Qatar 1-0 on Thursday to reach their 12th CONCACAF Gold Cup final.

Zardes combined with fellow reserve Nicholas Gioacchini for the game's only goal in a contest that highlighted the hosts' steady improvement over the course of the biennial North American showcase tournament.

"Niko made a great run and got a nice through ball," Zardes said. "I just had to crash the box."

The Americans will play the winner of Thursday's second semi-final between upstart Canada and defending champion Mexico for the title in Las Vegas on Sunday.

Eight-time champion Mexico defeated the US squad 1-0 in the 2019 final. The teams have met in six Gold Cup finals, with the Mexicans winning all but the 2007 matchup, when the six-time trophy-holder American side took a 2-1 victory.

Zardes entered the game in the 64th minute for Daryl Dike and it didn't take long for him to have an impact, being called for a foul on Karim Boudiaf two minutes later at Q2 Stadium in Austin, Texas.

He then bagged his goal four minutes from full time, his second of the tournament as the Americans extended their win streak to eight games.

Gioacchini, who also came on in the second half, did the heavy lifting on the play, working a give and go and then making a no-look pass off the outside of his right foot to a hard-charging Zardes, who poked it through a maze of player into the back of the net. Zardes said the team from Qatar, the host nation for the 2022 World Cup, looked fatigued near the end.

